MINUTES OF THE
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CIVIL AUTHORITY

Monday, February 14, 6:30 pm
Town Hall Meeting Room
Or
Interested parties may also attend this meeting electronically: • Video Conference via
ZOOM: Meeting ID (253 279 4161) • Conference call: Dial (929) 205 6099

Present: Hillary Knapp, Wendy Rowe Feldman, Kathy Clark, Bob Clark, Bill Moore, Laura Peterson, John Peterson, Seth Hopkins, Tim Guiles, Brian Coolidge, Bruce Blanch, Marge Munger and Sue Gage

I.   Discuss and Approve Letter to the Legislature regarding the reapportionment LAB Alternative map included with bill H589.

Seth Hopkins and Tim Guiles co-authored the letter regarding the latest Reapportionment Map included in Vermont House Bill H.589. (Letter Attached to these Minutes) Kathy and Bob Clark were concerned that this letter was an over-reach of the Brandon Board of Civil Authority (BCA), as it referenced other districts in the state, and the role of the local BCA is to respond to our district reapportionment only. Clerk, Sue Gage defended the stance in the letter, stating that the letter affirms our support for a single member district but adds our concern for the multi-member districts in reference to our single member district. Sue also noted that there are other organizations with similar concerns, notably for her, the Vermont Public Interest Research Group.

Bill Moore moved to accept the letter as written and send it to the Vermont General Assembly. Bill's motion was seconded by Bruce Blanch. 11 present voted yes, and 2 voted no. The motion passed.

Sue Gage will send the letter on 2/15/2022 which is the deadline to hear from folks regarding H.589.

II.   Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Gage, Clerk

14 February 2022

Vermont General Assembly
Office of Legislative Counsel, Attn: Reapportionment
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

To Amerin L Aborjaily, Legislative Counsel:

The Board of Civil Authority of the Town of Brandon, Vermont, considers the House reapportionment proposed in H.589, which makes Brandon a one-town, one-seat House district, to be in the interest of the Town, with the following serious reservations:

The Board has concerns about the inequity of our representation as a single-member district in contrast to other communities in Vermont which would be afforded more than one representative in the H.589 plan. We encourage the Government Operations Committee and the Vermont House of Representatives to adopt a reapportionment plan which respects the intent of the Legislative Apportionment Board (LAB) in its majority-endorsed report recommending 150 all-single-member House districts. Please consider especially the LAB's Final Report dated January 6, 2022, at pages 15 and 16, and our incorporated endorsement of that plan at page 62.

The Board has further concerns that the Legislature has chosen to disregard the tripartisan work product of the Legislative Apportionment Board for the second consecutive decennial reapportionment. States who entrust apportionment to independent commissions *and follow their recommendations* have consistently avoided disadvantaging or disenfranchising voters through the effects of politically-influenced reapportionment directed by legislators.

We also submit for your consideration the thought experiment / model on the following page which illustrates in practical terms the inherent inequity of a mix of single-member and multiple-member representative districts.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Gage, Town Clerk and Clerk of BCA

cc: The Hon. Rep. Stephanie Jerome and the Hon. Rep. Charles "Butch" Shaw

Suppose there are 1000 people who live in a Vermont town. This town happens to have five roads. About 600 people live on the main road, and about 100 on each of the other four roads. Each year they hold a meeting to decide what color to paint the roads. Some people want black - - - while others prefer green. Each person has their very personal reason for choosing one color rather than another.

The town's meeting room holds 10 people, so the town decides that each road will elect a representative to represent the people on that road. Since there are 600 people on one road, the town decides to give that road 6 representatives, while each of the other smaller roads each get 1 representative; thus the 10 representatives fit in the meeting room.

As it turns out, all of the smaller roads prefer green by a margin of 80/20 (80 of the 100 people on the road), so each of the representatives comes to the meeting to vote for green roads. The 6 representatives of the larger road are each totally honest and responsible representatives, so they go back to the people who live on their larger road and they ask them which color they prefer. They find out that 60% (360 people which is 60% of 600) would like a black road, and 40% (240 people which is 40% of 600) would like a green road. Since 60% is a clear majority of their constituents, each of the 6 representatives comes to the special meeting to vote for black roads.

If you look at the total picture, the number of people who want green roads are 80 for each of the 4 small roads plus 240 for the larger road for a total of 560 people (56% of the town). The number of people who want black roads are 20 for each of the 4 small roads and 360 for the larger road for a total of 440 people (44% of the town).

In this case, the representatives voted 6 to 4 for black roads, a solid 20% margin FOR black roads, while the people preferred green roads by a margin of 560 to 440, a solid 12% margin FOR green roads.

Observations:

1) the people who live on the smaller roads have less representation: each of them can only expect their lone representative to represent them.

2) the people who live on the larger road who are in the majority have more representation: each of them can expect all 6 of their representatives to represent them.

3) Interestingly, each person who lives on the larger road who is IN THE MINORITY has almost no representation because he/she is not in a group that is large enough to meet the threshold for their position to earn the votes of their representatives.